

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON PERFIN PRODUCTION AT SLOPERS by Dave Hill.

The first step in producing a perfin die is to mark the letters on the steel die which will be the part beneath the stamps through which the pins will go to enable holes to be punched through the stamps. Templates of each separate letter are used although the die is drilled by hand and minor variations can occur. I was shown a number of different sizes of template, the Bankers set with the distinctive bow legged A 4½mm high 8 hole as A10.03 and the Hospital set which was taller but still bow legged. This may have conceivably been used for single letter perfins but is otherwise too big. Other templates exist but are too big for stamps and are used for security endorsement for other things.

The die is then used as a template to drill the brass pin holder and the brass pin guide. The pin holder is slightly countersunk to match the top of the pins which are retained by a brass plate screwed on top. The pins occasionally are loose in the holder but this is insignificant as the pin guide locates them in position.

In operation the die and guide remain stationary with sufficient gap between to feed the sheets of stamps through (5 is the optimum number) and the pin holder goes up and down. The travel is enough in one direction to pierce the stamps and enter the die and in the other direction to strip the sheets from the pins (otherwise they would stay impaled on the pins) but without coming out of the guide. The guide is obviously essential, the image of pins waving about and hoping to find the corresponding holes in the die had always bothered me.

As for the pins, these are slightly tempered as they are too brittle at the heads when delivered and much time could be spent untangling broken pins from dies and stamps.

When the pins become rounded a stone can be run across the ends; when the holes become enlarged or the tops rounded they are drilled out and pins one thousandth of an inch bigger are put in. Pins are kept varying from 27 to 34 thousandths of an inch diameter. Occasionally a stone is rubbed over the face of the die.

This is different to the machines that perforate between stamps. The old established firm of Grovers, who make such machines, never use different size pins but use a special punch to restore the

edge of the holes in the die, then reamer them out and grind the face of the die all over to make it flat once more. The ends of the pins are squared up by running a stone over them. Otherwise, apart from the materials of construction and size, the machines of the two companies are similar.

Two types of electric machines are used at Slopers. Once over with single dies and twelve over, which since decimalisation are ten dies across but the old twelve die width is retained as the machines were originally made that width. Skilled operators can quickly change dies and there are means to "register" the stamps.

A treadle controls the rise and fall of the pins. One of the operatives is so quick she keeps her foot on the treadle all the time and can move the sheet of stamps forward and get perfect registration at each beat of the machine.

Hand operated machines perforate "PERFORATING MACHINERY" on Slopers letter heading and "THIS DESIGN IS THE PROPERTY OF J.SLOPER & CO AND SHALL NOT BE USED WITHOUT PERMISSION" on their drawings. (See Bulletin 248 Pg10 for illustration. Watch for some of these perforations on blank white paper coming up in the Auction. -Ed.)

In view of the fact that so much of Sloper's work is to do with security endorsement we are more than ever grateful for the courtesy extended by Mr. Cokayne to the members of the Perfin Society and record the valuable help he has given to us.